

# Vote counting process

2024 State general election



Electoral  
Commission  
QUEENSLAND

Under the *Electoral Act 1992*, vote counting can only begin after the close of polls at 6pm on election day. Different types of votes are counted in various stages, and counts are completed multiple times to ensure the accuracy of results.

During all vote counts candidates and registered political parties are entitled to have scrutineers present to observe the counting process. The ECQ has a [series of short videos](#) on the vote counting and scrutineering process.

The expected timeframes for completing vote counting following election day are detailed in the table below.

Date	Time	Milestone/Activity
Saturday 26 October 2024	6pm to 10pm	Preliminary and indicative counts conducted at polling booths.
	6pm to 11pm	Preliminary and indicative counts conducted (mainly) in Returning Officers' (RO) offices for early voting centres, mobile polling and postal votes.
	Shortly after 11pm	This banner will be placed on the results website when counting is finished for the night: <i>Counting has concluded for tonight.</i>
Sunday 27 October 2024	9am	Official first preference counts for polling booths, early voting centres, mobile polling and postal votes begin in RO offices.
	9am	Scrutiny, preliminary and official counts of in-person declaration votes begin.
Monday 28 October 2024	9am	Physical vote exchange, preliminary and official counts of ordinary absent and absent declaration votes commence.
Tuesday 5 November 2024	6pm	Until this time, preliminary and official counts of postal, mobile polling, in person declaration and absent votes continue as they are received.
		Cut-off for receipt of postal ballot papers.
Wednesday 6 November 2024	9am	Distribution of preference counts begin.

## Vote counting stages

### Unofficial preliminary count

The unofficial preliminary count begins after the close of polls at 6pm on election day. This count tallies the total number of first preference votes each candidate received.



### Indicative count

The indicative count allocates preferences to two candidates selected by the Electoral Commissioner. The two candidates for the indicative count for each electoral district remain in-confidence until 6pm on election day.

An indicative count enables the ECQ to make a better-informed estimate on election night of a likely outcome in an electoral district.

Depending on the results, the indicative count may be removed from the results website after election night.

### Official count

After the preliminary count is complete, an official count is conducted under the supervision of the RO for each electoral district. Postal votes and declaration votes are counted during this phase. No official counts are conducted on election night.

### Preference count

This process distributes votes according to the voters' preference as marked on the ballot paper. The preference count begins once it is clear which candidates have received the lowest number of first preference votes. This may be after the deadline for return of postal votes.

First, the candidate with the lowest number of first preference votes is excluded from the count. The preferences are distributed to other candidates according to the voters' wishes as marked on the ballot paper.

Then the candidate with the next lowest number of votes is eliminated from the count, and their preferences are distributed to the other candidates.

The process continues until two candidates remain, and one of the candidates has the majority of votes.

## **Declaration of results**

The ECQ will not declare the result of an election until the outcome is certain.

If the result is clear, the election may be declared once the official count has been conducted in the days after election day. However, in some cases the distribution of preferences will be required to determine the outcome.

The ECQ may need to wait until enough outstanding postal votes are received and counted to ensure there is certainty that a candidate has the majority of votes. In the 2020 State general election, the results in 63 electorates were declared following the postal vote return deadline, 10 days after election day.

Following the declaration of results, the elected candidate will be indicated on the ECQ's results website.

## **Types of votes**

### Ordinary vote

An ordinary vote is issued to a voter at polling place in their enrolled electorate. This includes early voting, election day voting, remote area voting or telephone voting.

### Ordinary absent vote

When a person votes at a polling place outside their electorate, their vote is called an 'ordinary absent vote.'

### In-person declaration vote

If a person goes to vote at a polling place, but their name isn't found on the electoral roll, a declaration vote is issued. The voter 'declares' they are entitled to vote. After the person fills out their ballot paper, it is placed inside a declaration envelope.

After election day, declaration envelopes are scrutinised. Once a voter's details are confirmed on the electoral roll, their vote is included in the count.

If a person completes a declaration vote at a polling place outside their electorate, it is referred to as an 'absent in-person declaration vote.'

## Polling booths

The ECQ counts ordinary votes issued at polling booths on election night. Both the preliminary and indicative counts are completed at the polling booth. Only ordinary votes for the electorate the booth is situated in are included in these counts.

## Early voting

The ECQ aims to count most ordinary votes issued during early voting on election night. Both preliminary and indicative counts are conducted for the electorate the early voting centre is situated.

Early voting centre counts will take place in the RO office, unless otherwise approved by the ECQ.

Some early voting centres in remote areas are unable to be counted on election night due to staffing availability. These votes will be returned to the RO office and counted as soon as practical after election day.

## Postal voting

Postal votes that have been received and scrutinised by ROs prior to election day will be counted on election night. Postal votes continue to be scrutinised and counted as they are received.

The cut-off for the return of postal votes is 6pm Tuesday 5 November 2024.

## Ordinary absent votes

Ordinary absent votes are not counted on election night (except for at Brisbane City Hall). They are sorted at the polling place and returned to the appropriate RO office.

Ordinary absent votes from election day and early voting centres and absent in-person declaration vote envelopes are exchanged between ROs from Monday 28 October 2024.

Once received in the correct electorate, ordinary absent votes from election day and early voting are counted by the RO. The absent in-person declaration vote envelopes are scrutinised by the RO and, if eligible, admitted to the count.

## **Brisbane City Hall**

Brisbane City Hall early voting centre and election day polling place will endeavour to count ordinary and ordinary absent votes on election night for all electorates.

## **In-person declaration votes**

In-person declaration votes are not counted on election night. They are sorted at the polling place and returned to the RO office. The in-person declaration votes for the RO's electorate are scrutinised and counted from Sunday 27 October 2024 to Tuesday 5 November 2024.

In-person declaration votes for other electorates (absent in-person declaration votes) are distributed to the appropriate RO from Monday 28 October 2024.

## **Telephone votes**

Telephone votes are not counted on election night. The votes are sorted into electorates by the telephone voting team in Brisbane. The votes are then dispatched to the relevant ROs from Monday 28 October 2024. Once received by the appropriate RO, the votes are counted in the RO's office.